



Children's Response Center

SERVICES FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT AND TRAUMATIC STRESS

EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE AND TRAUMATIC EVENTS ON CHILDREN

Unfortunately, children in our society are sometimes witnesses or victims of violent acts. Children may witness homicides, attempted homicides, gun violence, accidental deaths, severe domestic violence, suicides and other forms of violence. Sometimes, children do not witness these events, but are deeply affected when a close family member or friend has been the victim of an unnatural death. Children also may be the direct victims of violence themselves, as in the case of sexual abuse, physical abuse or kidnapping.

In addition, children may be the victims of non-criminal traumatic events, such as auto accidents, other types of accidents, fires, floods and other natural disasters. There are also increasing numbers of immigrant children who have been affected by traumatic events in their war-torn homelands.

Children who have been traumatized may exhibit any number of the following symptoms:

- Fears/worries about safety*
- Nightmares*
- Sleeplessness*
- Flashbacks*
- Regression to earlier behaviors (e.g., bed-wetting, clinginess, baby-talk, etc.)*
- Sadness/depression/severe grief reactions*
- Increased "jumpiness"*
- An appearance of being "numb"*
- Excessive daydreaming or staring into space*
- Intense avoidance of any reminder of the trauma*
- Anger/aggression*
- Behavior problems such as non-compliance*
- Withdrawal from friends, family and activities*
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches*
- Irritability*
- Inability to concentrate/lowered school performance*
- A refusal to acknowledge what has happened*
- An appearance that everything is fine*

All of these symptoms, either alone or in combination, can be expected responses to abnormal, traumatic events.

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